



June 3, 2005

West Warwick pair admit robbery plot

King L. Chan and **George O'Neill**, both of West Warwick, pleaded guilty today to federal conspiracy and firearms charges, admitting that they planned to commit a robbery at a firearms dealer in West Warwick. They also admitted possessing a sawed-off shotgun.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty pleas, which the defendants entered before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres in U.S. District Court, Providence.

At separate plea hearings, Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that Chan, with help from O'Neill, generated detailed plans to commit a robbery at a gun shop in West Warwick, after which they would commit a bank robbery in Massachusetts.

On February 9, West Warwick and Coventry detectives observed Chan conduct surveillance at Valley Firearms on Main Street in West Warwick.

On February 10, West Warwick Police obtained state warrants to arrest Chan and O'Neill and to search Chan's house at 226 Providence Street. In the house, officers found a duffle bag containing a sawed-off shotgun and detailed plans for various robberies, including one at Valley Firearms and at the Sovereign Bank in Lynnfield, Massachusetts. The latter included a plan to take women hostage at the bank and use them as human shields.

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Police arrested Chan as they executed the search warrant. At first, he admitted that he planned to rob Valley Firearms to get “start-up money” for the bank robbery. He then changed his story and said the plans were merely storylines for a book he was writing. However, at the plea hearing today, he admitted that the plans were for actual robberies.

O’Neill surrendered at the West Warwick Police station on February 11. He admitted participating in the robbery scheme and said that Chan had told him that, after his arrest, he had fabricated a claim that the robbery plans were part of a story line for a book. O’Neill also admitted helping Chan cut down a shotgun that they had purchased in late January.

Chan, 24, of 226 Providence Street, West Warwick, and O’Neill, 20, of 219 Providence Street, pleaded guilty to one count each of conspiracy to steal firearms from a federally licensed firearms dealer and possessing a sawed-off shotgun. The maximum penalty for conspiracy is five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. The maximum penalty for possessing a sawed-off shotgun is ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Pending sentencing, which is scheduled for September 9, Chan is detained at the Wyatt Federal Detention Center, Central Falls, and O’Neill is free on surety bond but is confined to his home.

The **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, West Warwick Police** and **Coventry Police** conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker is prosecuting the case.